

FNS National Nutrition Education Conference February 26, 2003

Remarks by Jerry Friedman, Executive Director, American Public Human Services Association, Washington, DC

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this wonderful conference.

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is a 73-year old bi-partisan organization representing all states and territories. This includes:

- State commissioners and secretaries,
- Several hundred local jurisdictions,
- Several thousand individual members.

APHSA also serves as an umbrella organization for ten affiliated associations – including Food Stamp Directors.

APHSA is unique among associations for its holistic perspective and a constituency that includes chief state policy makers and managers, local implementers, and individual practitioners that collectively reach more than 1 in 5 Americans yearly.

In terms of nutrition education, I would contend that this initiative presents a wonderful window of opportunity for collaboration between USDA and APHSA.

APHSA supports your efforts to improve this country's dietary habits and behaviors.

We would like to extend our vast network to you in this effort. Some possibilities include:

- Access to web site with links,
- Participation in national and affiliate meetings,
- Contributing to our publications and member communications,
- Showcasing best practices,
- Incorporate nutrition education into our orientation and training curriculum for human service professionals,

- Working with our members to get nutrition education on their radar screen and incorporated into their practice.

These are just several ways that we can partner with USDA and the caring community.

From our perspective-the challenge is indeed profound.

All of us, at whatever income level, are bombarded daily with a vast array of unhealthy foods that are made even more appealing through advertising, speed and packaging.

We believe that what is needed is a multi-pronged approach and constant reinforcement.

First however, in order to concentrate on sensible choices and healthy diets, low-income families must first have the means to purchase healthy foods and have access to adequate shopping choices.

The Food Stamp Program and WIC are the primary and best means to this end.

APHSA was thrilled with USDA's leadership and our partnership role in the passage of last year's Farm Bill.

Good public policy planning and collaboration resulted in simplification, strengthened benefits and improved access to the Food Stamp Program.

APHSA's focus now is on working with our members on Farm Bill implementation and embracing best practices to insure that nutrition education is fully integrated into these efforts.

I believe that there is one other important consideration and reason for APHSA to be involved and support this effort.

After 33 years in public administration, I have lived through the ups and downs of human services resource allocation. It is my observation that during tough budget times we have a tendency to do two stupid things:

- Cut education and training
- Eliminate or reduce prevention programs.

This occurs in spite of independent research that estimates savings of \$6 to \$12 in treatment for every \$1 spent on prevention.

It's public policy that is indeed "penny wise-pound foolish."

Nutrition education provides a low cost way in tough times to reverse that trend--potential exists to do the right thing and to do it right.

The nutrition education initiative is especially timely given new research on the state of the nation's health and obesity. Better education and understanding of the importance of good nutrition is even more essential today.

Thanks for including APHSA as a partner.

We look forward to working with you.